

MEDIA RELEASE

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High regard for education a key to Finland's success

Likely reasons behind Finland's continued success in international tests of student achievement will be presented to a leading education conference in Perth today.

Professor Patrik Scheinin from the University of Helsinki will present the case of the Finnish comprehensive school to discuss strategic questions of educational policy, teacher education and teaching in a keynote address to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference.

Finland has been a top performer in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) since its inception. The country's education system has been closely scrutinised by educators around the world, keen to find the answers to why some countries perform better than others on PISA.

Professor Scheinin will tell conference delegates that how the school system of a country manages the students' learning potential counts more than the amount of money a country spends on education or other socioeconomic factors such as parents' education or students' attitude towards school.

"The countries with the best PISA results do all manage to ensure that the weaker students are not left behind," Professor Scheinin says.

"What makes the Finnish school system specially interesting from the perspective of educational policy is that it is the only comprehensive school system with top PISA results."

Professor Scheinin attributes Finland's success to a combination of factors including the nation's high regard for education and the teaching profession; the high standard of applicants for teacher training; a nationally coordinated curriculum and the nation's inclusive comprehensive school system that provides all students with a high quality general education.

"The role of schooling as part of the Finnish history and cultural heritage is remarkable," Professor Scheinin says. "Education of the people was used as a strategy in creating the nation and teaching has been and still is a highly regarded profession."

Patrik Scheinin is a Professor of Education and the Dean of the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences at the University of Helsinki. He is a Vice Director and a founding member of the Centre for Educational Assessment and a member of the steering group of the Finnish PISA project.

The ACER Research Conference 2009, *Assessment and Student Learning: Collecting interpreting and using data to inform teaching*, takes place in Perth from 16-18 August 2009 at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.

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